

It was not that Goldsmith had never known
 hard times
 himself; he had fiddled his vagabond way
 across Europe;
 it was a difference, not of experience, but
 of tempera-
 ment. In this reaction against Goldsmith
 Crabbe first
 discovered himself, just as Fielding had
 begun by loathing
 and parodying Richardson.

Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
 La tinsel trappings of poetic pride? . . .
 By such examples taught, I paint the Cot,
 As Truth will paint it, and as Bards will

not
 The style is the faded convention of a
 hundred and fifty
 years ago; the sentiment might be that of a
 modern poet
 rebelling against Tennyson, or against the
 Georgians. We
 can understand how Johnson then, and
 Hardy a century
 later, felt at once the appeal of a mind so
 cleared of cant;
 indeed, I had already found myself
 wondering whether
 Crabbe must not have been one of Hardy's
 favourite
 poets, even before biography disclosed that
 from him
 Hardy derived his own first impulse
 toward realism.
 After all, this is an ancient school of writing
 —older, no
 doubt, even than the day when the Muses
 met Hesiod
 keeping sheep on Mount Helicon and
 taught him that
 they could tell truth as well as fiction, and
 paint life's
 harsh realities as well as Homer's high
 romance. Indeed,
 it is worth opening Crabbe and Hesiod side
 by side to see
 how vigorously a certain type of rustic
 temper can persist
 across the division of seas and centuries—
 disillusioned,
 sharp-tongued, shrewd-witted, yet with a

sense of beauty
of its own. The bleak Thracian gale that
pipes across
Hesiod's Boeotia echoes the north-easter
that nips East
Anglia; the Greek shrew
"Who, though her wedded husband be a stout man
and a sage,
With never a fire will roast him into a raw old age,
bears a family resemblance, despite three
thousand years,
to her Suffolk sister: